

What is claimed is:

1. An optical moisture detector for measuring ambient light conditions comprising:  
 an optical moisture sensor for sensing the presence of moisture on a moisture collecting surface, the sensor operable to emit a signal corresponding to sensed conditions; and  
 processor means for receiving the signal, for determining an absolute ambient light value corresponding to existing ambient light conditions, for comparing the value to a predetermined value, and for emitting a control signal if the value is less than the predetermined value as a result of the comparison.

2. The optical moisture detector of claim 1 further comprising:  
 means, responsive to the control signal, for controlling a light generating device.

3. The optical moisture detector of claim 1 further comprising:  
 timer means for disabling the processor means from comparing the value to the predetermined value for a predetermined period of time.

4. The optical moisture detector of claim 1 wherein the optical moisture sensor is operably mountable with respect to a windshield of a motor vehicle.

5. The optical moisture detector of claim 1 wherein the optical moisture sensor is operably positionable in a spaced relationship relative to a windshield of a motor vehicle.

2003

6. The optical moisture detector of claim 1 wherein the  
optical moisture sensor further comprises:  
a CCD camera for collecting data to be sent as signals to the  
processor means.

7. The optical moisture detector of claim 1 wherein the  
optical moisture sensor further comprises:  
a CMOS camera for collecting data to be sent as signals to  
the processor means.

8. The optical moisture detector of claim 1 wherein the  
optical moisture sensor further comprises:  
a photo array having a plurality of dark pixels and a plurality  
of standard pixels for collecting data to be sent as signals to the  
processor means.

9. The optical moisture detector of claim 1 wherein the  
processor means further comprises:  
a microprocessor for operably receiving the signal from the  
sensor.

2003

10. The optical moisture detector of claim 1 wherein the  
processing means compares the absolute ambient light value to a first  
predetermined value to determine if a signal to turn on a light generating  
device is to be sent, and compares the absolute ambient light value to a  
second predetermined value to determine if a signal to turn off the light  
generating device is to be sent.

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1                    16. The optical moisture detector of claim 11  
2 wherein the optical moisture sensor is operably positionable in a spaced  
3 relationship relative to a windshield of a motor vehicle.

*Page 1*  
2 comprising:  
3                    sensing the presence of moisture on a moisture collecting  
4 surface with an optical moisture sensor, the sensor operable to emit a  
5 signal corresponding to the sensed conditions;  
6                    receiving the signal and determining an absolute ambient  
7 light value corresponding to the existing ambient light conditions with  
8 processor means;  
9                    comparing the value to a predetermined value with the  
10 processor means; and  
11                    emitting a control signal with the processor means if the  
12 value is less than the predetermined value as a result of the comparing  
13 step.

1                    18. The method of claim 17 further comprising the step  
2 of:  
3                    mounting the optical moisture sensor to the windshield of a  
4 vehicle.

1                    19. The method of claim 17 further comprising the step  
2 of:  
3                    disposing the optical moisture sensor in a spatial relationship  
4 relative to the windshield of a vehicle.

6/23

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